

Kent court's annex 'topped off'

Governor, chief justice sign beam for top of building that will connect to courthouse

By SEAN O'SULLIVAN • The News Journal • June 26, 2009

A crowd of dignitaries, including Delaware Gov. Jack Markell and Delaware Supreme Court Chief Justice Myron Steele, gathered Thursday in Dover to "top off" the new annex to the Kent County Courthouse.

The \$88.1 million project will more than triple the space available to courts in Kent County.

During the ceremony, about 50 people signed a 20-foot-long steel beam that was then placed at the top of what will be the 150,000-square-foot addition.

The free-standing building, on the site of the recently demolished Robert O'Brien Building on The Green, will include courtrooms for Superior Court, the Court of Common Pleas and Chancery Court, along with office space for prosecutors, public defenders and law enforcement.

It will be connected to the 134-year-old Kent County Courthouse by a covered walkway.

In addition to Markell and Steele, Judy O'Brien, the widow of Robert O'Brien, was among those who participated in the signing event.

A tree also was placed on top of the structure as a sign of luck, an old construction tradition according to Catherine Bakerian of the state's Office of Management and Budget.

Ground was broken on the project in September and it is expected that nearly all court functions will be shifted to the new facility when it is completed in 2011.

Court officials in Kent County have said the expansion was long overdue and follows the completion of new or expanded court facilities in Sussex and New Castle counties in recent years.